



The St. Lawrence
Seaway Management
Corporation

Corporation de Gestion
de la Voie Maritime
du Saint-Laurent

04-344

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VIA FACSIMILE

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**Ref : Maritel Proposal to Serve as Automatic Identification System (AIS)
Frequency Coordinator (Public Notice (DA 03-3669))**

Gentlemen,

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) along with its U.S. counterpart, the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC), has, with the support and financial contribution of the marine industry, successfully implemented mandatory carriage of shipborne Automatic Identification System effective since March 2003. This system uses both Channel 87 and 88, and as a result, the recent proposal to the Federal Communications Commission by Maritel to serve as Automatic Identification System (AIS) Frequency Coordinator per Public Notice DA 03-3669, date November 19, 2003, is of significant concern to the SLSMC.

The navigation channel under SLSMC jurisdiction crosses the Canada-U.S. international boundary several times in the Montreal to Lake Ontario segment of the river and it is critical, for operational and safety reasons, that vessels now mandated to carry AIS do so in a seamless and transparent way. Since 1998, both the Canadian and U.S. Seaway entities share commercial vessel transit information via a common database, one step to facilitate the transit experience for our client base. The implementation of AIS has been an important milestone in providing the Vessel Traffic Services, in both Canada and the United States with accurate and timely information to maximize the efficiency, security and safety of the system. In addition to providing vessel identification, position, speed and heading to shore-based stations and other vessels in the vicinity, both AIS channels 87B and 88B are also used to provide critical information such as water levels, wind speed and direction, and other meteorological

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data. AIS has already proven itself in providing accurate information beyond the limitations of radar technology.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted changes to the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) in support of its mission to promote marine safety. SOLAS has recognized AIS as a primary means for ship collision avoidance, and has designated channels 87B and 88B as the international maritime AIS frequencies. IMO has also established a timetable to phase-in AIS mandatory carriage. The implementation of AIS in the jurisdictional waters of the Seaway Corporation was performed in accordance with this designation. Such a designation, worldwide, is important from a pragmatic and commercial point of view.

MMSI Assignment

A basic assignment principle for ship station MMSI is that the same identity applies to ALL radio equipment on board the vessel, including VHF/DSC, GPS, Loran, INMARSAT, etc. For vessel safety and security reasons, it is critical that this principle be adhered to. It is the Seaway's position that there be only one coordinating body responsible for the assignment of MMSI numbers for all requirements. Currently vessels are issued their MMSI numbers by their flag state. As an example, in Canada, Industry Canada is the sole coordinating body which issues these numbers.

Increased Costs

Recognizing the benefits and value-added in terms of ship safety and efficiency gains, the Seaway users provided financial support in the development of the AIS system within the Seaway and has had to equip its fleet with AIS transponders and other equipment to meet the mandatory carriage requirements. The marine industry, and in particular the users of the Seaway, continuously face fierce competition and a complex pricing scheme. The users of the system have already contributed to its development and installation and can not be expected to pay additional ongoing cost to an independent third party.

Security

The SLSMC has concerns with respect to Maritel's proposal to have « real-time access to AIS data to provision information and vessel location services to both the private and non-federal government entities. » With the eminent implementation of the International Ship and Ports Security Code in July 2004, this potentially widespread and unrestricted access to vessel position data is not reassuring in the context of increasing controls and security.

Information in regards traffic management, ship location and seaway system loading is resident in the Seaway Corporation's (SLSDC AND SLSMC) Traffic Control Master Data System, provided in part from AIS, and only specific extracts from this are made public.

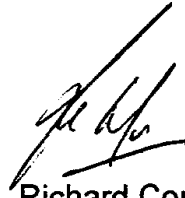
Not only are there commercial considerations with our customers, there are important security considerations. The U.S. and Canadian security agencies rely on the U.S. and Canadian Seaway Corporations to provide data in regards ship position and to restrict the availability of this information depending on the security protocol in place at the time.

It would be completely unacceptable to have an independent outside organization involved in this critical aspect.

It is also our understanding that in the coordination zone, as per the existing coordination agreement between Industry Canada and the FCC, Channel 88 is assigned to Canada, as defined by existing "VHF Channeling Arrangement".

For these reasons, the SLSMC supports the U.S. D.O.T. and the SLSDC position that the Maritel proposal is not only unnecessary and an unwarranted burden on the Canada-U.S. maritime commerce of the Great Lakes system, but also could pose security concerns to both countries. We therefore ask that the NTIA oppose the designation of Maritel by the FCC as the Automatic Identification System (AIS) frequency coordinator.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Corfe', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Corfe
President and Chief Executive Officer

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